

Appl. No. : **09/815,450**
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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (original) A method for invoking delivery of a digital product from a computer of an Internet vendor to a computer of a customer, while maintaining customer anonymity with respect to the vendor, comprising, with the computer system of a merchant:

transacting a sale of the digital product to the customer;

in response to the sale, transmitting to the customer a receipt for the purchase, said receipt containing a reference by which the customer may initiate a request for product delivery;

receiving a request for product delivery from the computer of the customer produced from the receipt; and

in response to the request for product delivery, securely transmitting to the computer of the vendor a fulfillment request containing sufficient information for the vendor to deliver the digital product to the customer,

wherein the method is performed without exposing the identity of the customer to the vendor.

2-27. (canceled)

28. (new) The method of Claim 1, wherein transmitting a receipt to the customer comprises transmitting a uniform resource locator (URL) to the computer of the customer, said URL comprising an encoded portion that identifies an associated order.

29. (new) The method of Claim 28, wherein the URL is transmitted to the computer of the customer by electronic mail.

30. (new) The method of Claim 28, further comprising receiving a request for said URL from the computer of the customer, and responding to the request by generating and returning a web page that comprises a link for initiating delivery of the digital product.

31. (new) The method of Claim 1, wherein the fulfillment request specifies an identifier of the digital product and a network address of the computer of the customer.

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32. (new) The method of Claim 1, wherein the fulfillment request contains a secure hash, the secure hash being a function of at least an identifier of the digital product and an identifier of an associated order.

33. (new) The method of Claim 1, wherein the computer system of the merchant transmits the fulfillment request to the computer of the vendor in response to determining that a corresponding order is not marked as fulfilled.

34. (new) The method of Claim 1, wherein the computer system of the merchant transmits the fulfillment request to the computer of the vendor in response to determining that a corresponding order has not been fulfilled more than a threshold number of times.

35. (new) The method of Claim 1, further comprising receiving from the computer of the vendor a delivery acknowledgement, and responding to the delivery acknowledgement by marking an order by the customer for the digital product as fulfilled.

36. (new) The method of Claim 1, further comprising inhibiting downloads of the digital product to the customer once the digital product has been downloaded a threshold number of times.

37. (new) The method of Claim 36, wherein the threshold is greater than one.

38. (new) The method of Claim 1, wherein the method is performed without exposing any information about the customer to the vendor.

39. (new) The method of Claim 1, wherein the method is performed without requiring any client software on the computer of the customer other than a web browser.

40. (new) The method of Claim 1, wherein the digital product is an electronic book.

41. (new) A merchant computer system that performs the method of Claim 1.

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42. (new) A computer-readable medium having stored thereon a computer program that, when executed by a merchant computer system, performs the method of Claim 1.

43. (new) A method performed by a merchant computer system, the method comprising:

receiving, at the merchant computer system, an order placed by a user for a digital product, said order identifying a user and payment information of the user;

storing a record of the order in a database of the merchant computer system;

subsequent to placement of the order, generating a fulfillment request message for transmission to a vendor computer system of a vendor that is responsible for delivery of the digital product to users, wherein the fulfillment request message includes information identifying the order and the digital product;

sending the fulfillment request message, or causing the fulfillment request message to be sent, to the vendor computer system to initiate electronic delivery of the digital product to the user;

receiving from the vendor computer system a confirmation that the digital product has been delivered to the user; and

in response to receiving the confirmation, updating the record of the order, as stored in the database of the merchant computer system, to indicate that the digital product has been delivered to the user;

wherein the method is performed by the merchant computer system without exposing to the vendor computer system either the payment information of the user or an identifier of the user.

44. (new) The method of Claim 43, wherein the fulfillment request message specifies an IP address of a user computer to which the digital product is to be delivered.

45. (new) The method of Claim 43, wherein the method further comprises the merchant computer system inhibiting additional deliveries of the digital product to the user once the digital product has been delivered to the user a threshold number of times.

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46. (new) The method of Claim 43, wherein the merchant computer system is further responsive to placement of the order by sending to a computer of the user an electronic receipt that includes a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) that may be accessed by the user to initiate a download of the digital product, said URL including an encoded portion that identifies the order.

47. (new) The method of Claim 46, wherein the URL points to the merchant computer system, which uses the encoded portion of the URL to generate the fulfillment request.

48. (new) The method of Claim 46, wherein the URL points to the vendor computer system, such that the user may initiate transmission of the fulfillment request to the vendor computer system by accessing the URL.

49. (new) The method of Claim 43, further comprising receiving, at the merchant computer system, a delivery request that corresponds to the order, and in response to the delivery request, determining whether the digital product has already been delivered to the user.

50. (new) The method of Claim 49, wherein the delivery request is generated by a user computer in response to user selection of a link transmitted thereto by the merchant computer system, said link pointing to a URL that includes encoded information about the order.

51. (new) The method of Claim 49, wherein the delivery request is received by the merchant computer system from the vendor computer system.

52. (new) The method of Claim 43, wherein the method enables the digital work to be securely delivered to a computer of the user over a network without requiring any client software on the computer of the user other than a web browser.

53. (new) The method of Claim 43, wherein the digital work is an electronic book.

54. (new) A merchant computer system that performs the method of Claim 43.

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55. (new) A computer-readable medium having stored thereon a computer program that, when executed by a merchant computer system, performs the method of Claim 43.